



Amazon workers in NYC vote to unionize in historic labor win

By HALELUYA HADERO,
ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and
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NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon workers in Staten Island, New York, voted to unionize on Friday, marking the first successful U.S. organizing effort in the retail giant's history and handing an unexpected win to a nascent group that fueled the union drive.

Warehouse workers cast 2,654 votes — or about 55% — in favor of a union, giving the fledgling Amazon Labor Union enough support to pull off a victory. According to the National Labor Relations Board, which is overseeing the process, 2,131 workers — or 45% — rejected the union bid.

The 67 ballots that were challenged by either Amazon or the ALU were not enough to sway the outcome. Federal labor officials said the results of the count won't be verified until they process any objections — due by April 8 — that both parties may file.



Staten Island based Amazon.com Inc distribution center union members celebrate after getting the voting results to unionize on Friday, April 1, 2022 in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

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Associated Press

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
TICO KOCK STEEL DRUM 4 - 6pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	CARLOS ORLATE SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

Happy Hour
12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10

PREMIUM
BRANDS

KARAOKE
HAPPY HOUR
9:00 - 11:00pm

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Continued from Front

The victory was an uphill battle for the independent group, made up of former and current workers who lacked official backing from an established union and were out-gunned by the deep-pocketed retail giant. Despite obstacles, organizers believed their grassroots approach was more relatable to workers and could help them overcome where established unions have failed in the past.

They were right.

Chris Smalls, a fired Amazon employee who has been leading the ALU in its fight on Staten Island, bounded out of the NLRB building in Brooklyn on Friday with other union organizers, pumping their fists and jumping, chanting "ALU." They uncorked a bottle of Champagne, and Smalls hailed the victory as a call to arms for other Amazon workers across the sprawling company.

"I hope that everybody's paying attention now because a lot of people doubted us," he said.

Smalls hopes the success in New York will embolden workers at other facilities to launch their own organizing campaigns. Even his group will soon shift their attention to a neighboring Amazon warehouse on Staten Island, where a separate union election is scheduled to be held in late April. Organizers believe Friday's win is going to make it easier for them to win there, too.

Amazon posted a statement on its company website Friday saying that it was evaluating its options following the election.

"We're disappointed with the outcome of the election in Staten Island because we believe having a direct relationship with the company is best for



People arrive for work at the Amazon distribution center in the Staten Island borough of New York, Monday, Oct. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

our employees," the post said. "We're evaluating our options, including filing objections based on the inappropriate and undue influence by the NLRB that we and others (including the National Retail Federation and U.S. Chamber of Commerce) witnessed in this election."

The company did not elaborate but it signaled it might challenge the election based on a lawsuit filed in March by the NLRB, which sought to force Amazon to reinstate a fired employee who was involved in the union drive.

Mark Cohen, director of retail studies at Columbia University, said he doesn't see how workers will benefit from a unionized Amazon facility and called the overall push to unionize companies misguided. He said that Amazon is a "highly disciplined and regimented" business willing to pay premium wages and good benefits, but it also demands tremendous output from its workers who work 10-hour shifts.

"Amazon is not going to change their culture because there is now a union in their midst," Cohen said. "They might be forced to let people work eight hours but those people will make less money."

The successful union effort on Staten Island stood in contrast to the one launched in Bessemer, Alabama by the more es-

tablished Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Workers at an Amazon warehouse there appeared to have rejected a union bid but outstanding challenged ballots could change the outcome. The votes were 993-to-875 against the union. A hearing to review 416 challenged ballots is expected to begin in the next few days.

The union campaigns come at a time of widespread labor unrest at many corporations. Workers at more than 140 Starbucks locations around the country, for instance, have requested union elections and several of them have already been successful. But Amazon has long been considered a top prize for the labor movement given the company's massive size and impact. The results in Staten Island reverberated all the way to the White House.

"The president was glad to see workers ensure their voices are heard with respect to important workplace decisions," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at Friday's briefing about the vote. "He believes firmly that every worker in every state must have a free and fair choice to join a union and the right to bargain collectively with their employer."

John Logan, director of labor and employment studies at San Francisco State

University, said the union win was a potential tipping point two years into a pandemic that has shifted the labor landscape.

"We knew that unions were having a moment, but this is much bigger," Logan said. "There is no bigger prize than organizing Amazon." He added that the ALU's win defies traditional thinking that only national unions can take on big companies. But the group might still have a fight ahead of it, according to Erin Hatton, a sociology professor at the University of Buffalo in New York.

"Getting Amazon to the bargaining table will be another feat all together," Hatton said. "Oftentimes the union will fizzle out because the company doesn't come to the bargaining table in good faith as they're obliged to do." Rebecca Givan, professor of labor studies at Rutgers University, said the victory is just the first step in a likely protracted battle against Amazon.

"It's clear Amazon will keep fighting, they're not conceding that workers have a right to organize," she said. "It looks like the legal questions they've raised this afternoon suggest they're trying to undermine entire authority of NLRB."

Amazon has pushed back hard in the lead-up to both elections in Staten Island and Bessemer. The retail giant held mandatory

meetings, where workers were told unions are a bad idea. The company also launched an anti-union website targeting workers and placed English and Spanish posters across the Staten Island facility. In Bessemer, Amazon has made some changes to but still kept a controversial U.S. Postal Service mailbox that was key in the NLRB's decision to invalidate last year's vote.

Both labor fights faced unique challenges. Alabama, for instance, is a right-to-work state that prohibits a company and a union from signing a contract that requires workers to pay dues to the union that represents them.

The union landscape in Alabama is also starkly different from New York. Last year, union members accounted for 22.2% of wage and salary workers in New York, ranked only behind Hawaii, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's more than double the national average of 10.3%. In Alabama, it's 5.9%. Amazon workers in Staten Island are seeking longer breaks, paid time off for injured employees and an hourly wage of \$30, up from a minimum of just over \$18 per hour offered by the company. The estimated average wage for the borough is \$41 per hour, according to a similar U.S. Census Bureau analysis of Staten Island's \$85,381 median household income.

Ross Harrison, who voted in favor of organizing on Staten Island, was hopeful that the union could improve things at work, but was unsure about its greater impact.

"Life is a lot bigger than a union," said Harrison as he reported for his shift Friday. "Amazon's a great job, and the union is a great opportunity for the people that's looking forward to it." But others weren't as celebratory.

Tinea Greenaway voted against unionizing but said she would reserve further judgment for now. "We can't take back our votes," she said. "I'll give things a chance, but let's see if they deliver on what they promised." □



Report: U.S. military must do more to avoid civilian deaths

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military needs to adjust its planning, training, targeting and use of weapons in order to better avoid widespread civilian deaths and damage such as the devastating 2017 battle to liberate the Syrian city of Raqqa from Islamic State militants, a new RAND report said Thursday.

The report requested by the Pentagon reflects criticism of the military's airstrike campaign that, according to some estimates, killed more than 1,600 civilians in Raqqa, as the U.S.-led coalition worked to destroy the Islamic State caliphate that wrested control of large swaths of Iraq and Syria.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said the report, which lays out a series of recommendations to improve military procedures and strategy, will be used as the department develops its own broader plan to reduce civilian harm.

"No other military works as hard as we do to mitigate civilian harm, and yet we still cause it," said Kirby.



Pentagon spokesman John Kirby speaks during a briefing at the Pentagon in Washington, Thursday, March 31, 2022.

Associated Press

"We're going to continue to try to learn from past issues."

RAND concluded that the battle for Raqqa provided important lessons.

Michael McNerney, lead author of the RAND report, called Raqqa "a cautionary tale about civilian harm in urban combat." He said it "should serve as an ex-

tra incentive to the DoD to strengthen its policies and procedures to mitigate, document and respond to civilian harm."

The RAND report noted that there has been a wide range of estimated civilian casualties during the siege, but also said it believes that 60%-80% of Raqqa was left uninhabitable by the time

the city was liberated in October 2017.

Initially the U.S.-led coalition estimated that it was responsible for 38 incidents involving 240 civilian casualties — including 178 who were killed. A consortium of local Syrian and international groups, including Amnesty International and Airwars, put the number of casual-

ties at a "high estimate" of 1,600, but said that about 774 of them could specifically be "verified" by data as the result of coalition action.

The report makes it clear that several thousand more civilians likely died, based on the number of bodies uncovered by U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, but many were probably killed by IS or other fighters on the ground.

"Our report focuses on U.S. actions in Raqqa, but the actions of the Syrian government and its Russian and Iranian partners undoubtedly contributed far more to civilian harm and suffering in Syria overall," McNerney said.

The report noted that the challenges in Raqqa were compounded by limits on the number U.S. troops that could be there, as well as where they could be positioned. U.S. troops on the ground could have provided better targeting and civilian information, including on Islamic State militants' efforts to use civilians as human shields, the report said. □

Psaki won't confirm she's leaving White House for MSNBC

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Friday would not confirm reports that she will soon take a TV job at MSNBC, saying she is focused on her job speaking for President Joe Biden.

"I have nothing to confirm about my length of public service or planned service or anything about consideration about next plans," Psaki said under questioning at her first briefing after COVID-19 forced her into quarantine for a second time in late-March.

"I'm very happy to be standing with all of you here today after it felt like a never-ending time in my basement quarantining away from my family," she said. "My focus every day continues to be speaking on behalf of the president." The Axios news site first

reported Friday, citing a source close to the matter, that Psaki is in exclusive talks to join MSNBC after she leaves the White House around May.

Multiple MSNBC representatives did not respond Friday to emailed requests for comment.

Reports earlier this year said Psaki was being heavily courted by both MSNBC and CNN, where she provided on-air commentary before joining then-President-elect Biden's transition team. The Axios report Friday suggested that Psaki, 43, had narrowed her search.

Under questioning Friday about her future employment and the ethics of negotiating a TV job while still serving as a public face for the administration, Psaki repeatedly stressed that she has complied with all ethical and legal requirements

imposed by the Biden administration.

"I have always gone over and above the stringent ethical and legal requirements of the Biden administration, and I take that very seriously," she said. "And as is standard for every employee at the White House, I've received rigorous ethics counseling, including as it relates to any future employment."

White House press secretaries typically do not hold the grueling job for very long, and presidents often are served by multiple chief spokespersons. President Barack Obama had three during his eight years in office, while President Donald Trump had four during his four-year term.

Psaki has been open about saying she would hold the job for at least a year before she started to think about moving on, often



White House press secretary Jen Psaki speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Friday, April 1, 2022, in Washington. Associated Press

citing her young son and daughter as a reason. In May 2021, she spoke to political strategist and podcast host David Axelrod about why she loved the job of White House press secretary — and why she was unlikely to still be doing it a year later.

"I have little kids and I don't want to miss time with

them. I don't want to miss moments," she said.

She expressed similar sentiment Friday.

"At whatever time I leave the White House, I can promise you the first thing I'm going to do is sleep and spend time with my 3- and 6-year-olds, who are my most important audiences of all," Psaki said. □

Caseworkers: Texas order on trans kids handled differently

By PAUL J. WEBER
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — When Texas Gov. Greg Abbott put in motion abuse investigations into the parents of some transgender kids, child welfare supervisor Randa Mulanax said what happened next strayed from normal protocols.

There was unusual secrecy, with texts and emails discouraged. Allegations about trans kids received elevated status. In Texas, fewer than three in 10 child welfare investigations end with findings that harm likely occurred — classified as "reason to believe" — but the changes looked to Mulanax like these cases would be predetermined from the start.

"It was my understanding that they wanted to be found 'reason to believe,'" Mulanax told The Associated Press in her first interview since leaving the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, where she worked for six years until quitting last month. "That's why we were having to figure out a way to staff it up and see how we go about it, since it doesn't match our policy right now."

As early as Friday, the Texas Supreme Court could de-



Demonstrators gather on the steps to the State Capitol to speak against transgender-related legislation bills being considered in the Texas Senate and Texas House, May 20, 2021 in Austin, Texas. Associated Press

cide whether the state can resume at least nine investigations into the parents of transgender children. They are the first to fall on the radar of child welfare authorities since Texas' Republican governor in February directed the state to begin handling reports of gender-confirming care for kids as child abuse — the first such order issued in the U.S.

The court fight in Texas comes as Republicans across the country are

leaning into policies aimed at transgender Americans, most prominently through bans on transgender athletes on girls sports teams. But Texas is the only state where a GOP governor has greenlighted abuse cases against the parents of transgender children, which several current and departing Texas child welfare workers say was rushed into action and has sunk already low morale at their troubled state agency

even deeper.

It is unclear how many Texas child welfare investigators — who are tasked with carrying out Abbott's directive — have quit in protest. Mulanax is one of at least two state Child Protective Services workers who are leaving and added their names this week to a court brief that urged Texas' justices to keep the investigations sidelined. Five other investigators who remain at the agency also signed on.

Abbott's instructions to Texas child welfare officials takes aim at treatments for children that include puberty blockers and hormone therapy.

Patrick Crimmins, spokesman for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, declined comment Thursday, citing the ongoing lawsuit.

"We're being so closely monitored on those type of cases that you wouldn't be able to just say, 'Oh, nothing to see,'" said Shelby McCowen, a child welfare investigator who called the directive the "last straw" and is quitting after less than a year at the agency.

Texas completed more than 157,000 child welfare investigations in the last fiscal year, according to state data. McCowen said the cases involving parents of transgender families were drawing the same attention as child death investigations, and like Mulanax, said instructions were given not to discuss the cases through state emails or phones — only on personal devices, or face-to-face.

The cases were to be referred to as "special assignments" rather than using a case name or number, according to McCowen. □

Man in GoFundMe scam gets 27-month federal prison sentence



In this May 28, 2019, photo, Mark D'Amico stands during his arraignment to charges including theft by deception at Burlington County Superior Court in Mount Holly, N.J. Associated Press

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP) — A New Jersey man who conspired with his then-girlfriend to cook up a feel-good story about a helpful homeless man and then

used the lie to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations online was sentenced in federal court Friday to more than two years in prison.

Mark D'Amico will also have to serve three years probation once he completes his 27-month term. He also must pay restitution and undergo gambling, drug and mental health counseling. Before being sentenced, D'Amico told U.S. District Judge Noel Hillman that he was a changed man, devoted to his family.

"The person that did the things that led us here no longer exists," D'Amico said. He had pleaded guilty before Hillman in Camden in November to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. An indictment unsealed in January 2020 charged D'Amico with a total of 16 counts of conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering. He had already pleaded

guilty to charges in state court last year. His former girlfriend, Katelyn McClure, and homeless veteran Johnny Bobbitt Jr. previously pleaded guilty to state and federal charges. Bobbitt was sentenced to five years' probation on state charges in 2019. Both are scheduled to be sentenced on the federal charges this year.

The trio made up a story in late 2017 about Bobbitt giving \$20 to help McClure when her car ran out of gas in Philadelphia, according to prosecutors. D'Amico and McClure solicited donations through GoFundMe, purportedly to help Bobbitt, and conducted newspaper and television interviews. Investigators said D'Amico was the plot's

ringleader.

They eventually raised more than \$400,000 in donations over about a month, according to investigators, who said almost no part of the tale was true. The group had met near a Philadelphia casino in October 2017 shortly before they told their story, prosecutors said.

Authorities began investigating after Bobbitt sued the couple, accusing them of not giving him the money. The federal criminal complaint alleged all of the money raised in the campaign was spent by McClure and D'Amico on a recreational vehicle, a BMW and trips to casinos in Las Vegas and New Jersey. □

WWF report says online wildlife trade on rise in Myanmar

By **ELAINE KURTENBACH**
AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — A report by the World Wildlife Fund shows illegal purchases of wildlife online are growing in Myanmar in a threat both to public health and to endangered species. The report issued Friday found that enforcement of bans on such transactions has weakened amid political turmoil following a 2021 military takeover.

The number of such dealings rose 74% over a year earlier to 11,046, nearly all of them involving sales of live animals. For the 173 species traded, 54 are threatened with global extinction, the report said.

Researchers identified 639 Facebook accounts belonging to wildlife traders. The largest online trading group had more than 19,000 members and dozens of posts per week, it said.

The animals and animal parts bought and sold involved elephants, bears and gibbons, Tibetan antelope, critically endangered pangolins and an Asian giant tortoise. The most popular mammals were various species of langurs and monkeys, often bought as pets.

Most of the animals advertised for sale were taken



In this photo released by the World Wildlife Fund, one of 16 tigers cubs seized from smugglers on Friday, Oct. 26, 2012, has blood samples taken from veterinary team from the wildlife forensic unit to trace the DNA in Chaiyaphum province, Thailand.

Associated Press

from the wild. They also included civets, which along with pangolins have been identified as potential vectors in the spread of diseases such as SARS and COVID-19.

Shaun Martin, who heads the WWF's Asia-Pacific regional cybercrime project, said monitoring of the online wildlife trade shows different species being kept close together, sometimes in the same cage.

"With Asia's track record

as a breeding ground for many recent zoonotic diseases, this sharp uptick in online trade of wildlife in Myanmar is extremely concerning," he said.

The unregulated trade in wild species and resulting interactions between wild species and humans raise the risks of new and possibly vaccine-resistant mutations of illnesses such as the COVID-19 that could evolve undetected in non-human hosts into more dangerous

variants of disease, experts say.

COVID-19 is one of many diseases traced back to animals. The killing and sale of what is known as bushmeat in Africa was thought to be a source for Ebola. Bird flu likely came from chickens at a market in Hong Kong in 1997. Measles is believed to have evolved from a virus that infected cattle.

"Illegal wildlife trade is a serious concern from the point of view of biodiversity pres-

ervation and conservation and its potential impact on health security," said Mary Elizabeth G. Miranda, an expert on zoonotic diseases and illness and CEO of the Field Epidemiology Training Program Alumni Foundation in the Philippines.

Social media and other online platforms have joined a worldwide effort to crack down on the thriving trade in birds, reptiles, mammals and animal parts. In Myanmar, much of the trade in wildlife is through Facebook, which as a member of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking online has taken action to block or remove accounts of people engaged in such transactions.

But as is true elsewhere, new accounts often pop up just as soon as old ones are shut down, hindering enforcement, the report noted. Easy online access to the animals also is driving up demand, worsening the problem.

Discussions of purchases of protected species often took place in open Facebook groups, suggesting that such dealings remain "largely risk-free," the report said. Since payments and deliveries often are done using messenger apps, controlling the problem is doubly difficult. □

Indonesia, Malaysia sign accord to protect migrant workers

By **EDNA TARIGAN**
Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia's president and Malaysia's prime minister looked on as officials signed an agreement Friday on the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia during a meeting in Jakarta.

The memorandum of understanding, signed by Malaysian Human Resources Minister Saravanan Murugan and Indonesian Manpower Minister Ida Fauziyah, outlines the One Channel System, which regulates the entire process of recruiting, placing and repatriating Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.

"Indonesian migrant workers have contributed a lot to economic development in Malaysia," Indonesian President Joko Widodo said, "so it is only natural that they get maximum rights and protection from our two countries."

Indonesia's population of over 270 million has created a surplus of workers, and Malaysia is one of the main destination countries for them. According to the National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers, more than 79,000 Indonesian migrant workers recorded work assignments in Malaysia in 2019. The number decreased in 2020 and 2021.

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob spoke to a conference during his second visit to Jakarta since he was appointed in August.

"As a neighboring country, Malaysia has always appreciated and valued the contribution of Indonesian migrant workers to the economic development and life of the Malaysian people," Ismail said. "This MoU will ensure that all processes for the recruitment and protection of migrant workers will be carried out comprehensively by the parties concerned based on applicable laws in both countries"

Widodo added that the two countries agreed to



In this photo released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, left, speaks as Indonesian President Joko Widodo looks on during a press conference following their meeting at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Friday, April 1, 2022.

Associated Press

begin a discussion in partnership with law enforcement addressing a high

rate of human trafficking between Indonesia and Malaysia. □

U.N. says Yemen's warring parties agree to 2-month truce

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Yemen's warring sides have accepted a two-month truce, starting with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the U.N. envoy to Yemen said Friday.

The envoy, Hans Grundberg, announced the agreement from Amman, Jordan, after meeting separately with both sides in the country's brutal civil war in recent days. He said that he hoped the truce would be renewed after two months.

The agreement comes after a significant escalation in recent weeks that saw Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claim several attacks across the country's borders, targeting the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he hoped the truce would pave the way toward peace, but added, "we know that these agreements are always fragile." The truce is to start on Saturday, the first day of Ramadan, and will also allow for shipments of fuel to arrive in the Yemen's key port city of Hodeida and for passenger flights to resume from the airport in the capi-



Yemeni police inspect a site of Saudi-led airstrikes targeting two houses in Sanaa, Yemen, Saturday, March 26, 2022.

Associated Press

tal, Sanaa.

U.N. spokesperson Farhan Haq said the warring sides agreed to halt all offensive military, air, ground and maritime operations inside Yemen and across its borders, starting at 7 p.m. Saturday.

The agreement came after the Saudi-led coalition, which has been battling the Houthis in Yemen since 2015, began observ-

ing a unilateral cease-fire on Wednesday — an offer that was rejected by the rebels. Saudi Arabia had proposed the unilateral cease-fire as part of talks it hosted aiming to resolve the war in Yemen. But the Houthis did not attend the talks because they were not held on neutral territory. Last Saturday, the Houthis also announced their own unilateral initiative that in-

cluded a three-day suspension of cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia, as well as fighting inside Yemen. Their announcement came shortly after they claimed attacks on a key Saudi oil facility in the Red Sea city of Jiddah, ahead of a Formula One race in the kingdom.

Inside Yemen, many front lines have largely stagnated, particularly in the key

government-held city of Marib, as the war has become more stalemated.

On Friday, in a Twitter post, Mohammed Abdel-Salam, the spokesman and chief negotiator of the Houthis, welcomed the cease-fire.

Yemen's war began in September 2014, when the Houthis swept into the capital, Sanaa, from their northwestern stronghold in the Arab world's poorest country. The Houthis then pushed into exile the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, elected in 2012 as the sole candidate after the long rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

A Saudi-led coalition, including the UAE, entered the war in March 2015 to try and restore Hadi's government to power. But the war, which evolved into a proxy conflict, stretched into long bloody years, pushing much of Yemen's people to the brink of famine.

The United Nations and others had been pushing the coalition and rebels to stop the fighting for Ramadan, as has tenuously occurred in past years.

"This is the result of fairly painstaking work" by Grundberg and other diplomats, Haq said. □

Congo joins East African trade bloc, widening the market



A woman sells fruits at the Virunga market in Goma, eastern Congo, Tuesday March 29, 2022.

Associated Press

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA

Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — The central African nation of Congo has joined the East African Community, widening the trade bloc's footprint with the admission

of its seventh member.

Congo applied to join the regional trade bloc, commonly known by its initials as the EAC, in 2019.

President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya announced Congo's admission on Tuesday, call-

ing it a "historic" moment for a group that originally only included Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

The bloc also includes Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. With Congo's admission, it now commands a market of about 300 million people. Its overall goal is to create a political federation.

The bloc's common market mandates free movement of people, goods and capital, although occasional trade disputes among members have raised questions related to protectionism among local authorities. There also have been political tensions among members that the bloc hasn't been able to resolve.

Rwanda's government closed a busy border cross-

ing with Uganda in February 2019 in what Uganda called a trade embargo. Rwanda's government ordered its citizens not to travel to Uganda, asserting that Rwandan citizens were not safe across the border. The border crossing was only reopened earlier this year.

But South Sudan and Congo, the EAC's most recent members, were keen to join the bloc.

Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi said his country is "looking forward to increased intra-EAC trade and reduction of tension" among neighbors, according to a communique announcing Congo's membership of the bloc.

"It is the desire of (Congo) to see the creation of a new organ in the EAC that

is solely focused on mining, natural resources and energy that will be based in Kinshasa," he said.

Despite its vast size and wealth of natural resources, Congo remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

Eastern Congo is particularly plagued by rebel violence as several armed groups vie for control of its mineral-rich lands.

One armed group, the M23, launched attacks against government troops near the Uganda border on Monday, forcing thousands of civilians to seek temporary shelter in Uganda.

In another part of eastern Congo, Ugandan troops are helping Congolese forces to hunt down rebels linked to an Islamic extremist group. □

Russia war sanctions mean a struggle for Cuban car owners

By JUAN ZAMORANO and
GISELA SALOMON
Associated Press

ARTEMISA, Cuba (AP) — Francisco Pérez Rodríguez has a car problem one that's starting to be all too common for many Cubans. He's been rebuilding the engine of his father-in-law's Moskvich one of tens of thousands of cars and other vehicles that poured into Cuba from its Cold War allies in the Soviet bloc and later Russia over the past half century.

To run, it needs a new timing belt. But Pérez Rodríguez said that's something only available these days in Russia. And flights there have been disrupted by Western sanctions imposed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Global restrictions on transport and trade with Russia pose an especially serious problem for Cubans, whose socialist government has lived since the early 1960s under an embargo imposed by the nearby United States. Much of the island's fleets of trucks, buses, cars and tractors came from distant Russia and are now aging, in need of parts.

And much like Russian tourists, those parts are no longer arriving.



A vintage Russian-made Lada car passes the Russian Our Lady of Kazan Orthodox Cathedral in Havana, Cuba, Friday, April 1, 2022.

ger arriving.

Transportation in Cuba can be difficult in the best of times.

Buses have often been in short supply, cargo trucks are sometimes pressed into service for rural passengers and the streets are filled with Russian-made Ladas, Niva SUVs and Jeep-like Uazs.

Even many of the legendary 1950s-vintage American cars that roll along

Havana's waterfront have been modified over the years to use Russian engines and other parts.

Cuban statistics indicate the island has about 20,000 old American cars and 80,000 to 100,000 Ladas.

"For the Ladas, everything is brought from Russia. Many people are going to be affected," said Pérez Rodríguez, 57, who operates a lathe workshop in Artemisa, just southeast of Havana.

Along with disruption of the key tourism industry and financial transactions with Russia, "the interruption of transportation is going to be a problem for Cuba in terms of spare parts," said William LeoGrande, an expert on Cuba at the American University in Washington, D.C.

"This just makes life even harder, even if they find ways to work around these sanctions on Russia," he

said. "It is going to be more expensive; it is going to be more time consuming, and it is just going to make their economic situation worse" Cuba's economy already has been slammed by tightened U.S. sanctions under the Trump administration and by the coronavirus pandemic.

Manuel Taboada, a 26-year-old taxi driver in Old Havana, is already worried about his own Lada.

"Now with the mess of the war, with everything that is happening, it will have a big effect because they can't travel and they can't bring things in," Taboada said.

"Honestly, we don't know how we are going to end up because there are specific parts for this car."

The exact scale of the problem is difficult to measure because much of the trade in parts occur in the informal market — exchanges between individuals, said Pavel Vidal Alejandro, an economics professor at the Pontifical Javeriana University in Cali, Colombia. "The Cubans have a lot of restrictions on travel without a visa to other countries, and Russia is one of the exceptions." □

Associated Press

Food convoy heads to Ethiopia's Tigray, 1st since December

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP)

— A convoy of trucks carrying food aid entered territory controlled by fighters loyal to the fugitive leaders of Ethiopia's Tigray region on Friday, the first humanitarian convoy to do so since Dec. 14, the U.N. World Food Program said.

The arrival of the trucks came eight days after Ethiopia's federal government declared an immediate humanitarian truce. The U.N. estimates that 90% of Tigray's 6 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. It says 100 trucks must enter every day to feed people there.

"WFP-led convoys to Tigray are back on the road & making steady progress," the agency tweeted. It added that the trucks "arrived in Erepti" carrying

over 500 metric tons of food supplies "for communities on edge of starvation."

Erepti is a district in the neighboring state of Afar, into which the war has spilled in recent months.

Fighters loyal to the outlawed party of Tigray's leaders the Tigray People's Liberation Front, or TPLF are present in six districts in Afar, having entered the region in December.



Workers clean the floor as sacks of food earmarked for the Tigray and Afar regions sit in piles in a warehouse of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Semera, the regional capital for the Afar region, in Ethiopia on Feb. 21, 2022.

Associated Press

Getachew Reda, TPLF spokesman, tweeted that 20 WFP trucks had crossed into territory controlled by their fighters and are now on their way to Mekele, the Tigray capital.

The Tigray fighters had said they would observe the humanitarian truce declared by the government if aid started to reach Tigray.

"This is one good step in the right direction," Getachew added.

"The bottom line, though, isn't about how many trucks are allowed but whether there is a system in place to ensure unfettered humanitarian access for the needy!"

Ethiopian authorities on Thursday urged humanitarian groups to transport aid supplies by air "as much as possible."

Government spokesman Legesse Tulu on Friday repeated demands that the Tigray fighters withdraw from the Afar and Amhara regions.

"We call on the international community to put pressure on the TPLF warriors," he told The Associated Press.

In recent months, some food and nutrition supplies have been flown into Tigray, but these represent a fraction of the region's needs. Banking services and phone lines also remain down across Tigray.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Thursday that several agencies have been forced to suspend operations "due to (a) lack of supplies, cash, and fuel." □

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20th edition of Soul Beach Music Festival will take place in Aruba on Memorial Day weekend

From the 25th to the 30th of May, Aruba will once again be a host for Soul Beach Music Festival. The headliners for this event have already been revealed where Mike Epps will be the headline for the Comedy Night, Mary J Blige on Saturday and New Edition on Sunday. Together they will have various other artists who will be performing and together celebrate the 20th edition of Soul Beach Music Festival.

Aruba Tourism Authority sees the return of this event as another indicator that Aruba and its tourism is recovering. The 20th edition was meant to take place in



2020, however for reasons related to the pandemic the event could not be organized in 2020 nor 2021.

A.T.A has measured the economic impact of that an event like this brings to Aruba. In 2019, which was the last time the event took place, it had a direct eco-

nomie impact on Aruba of 12 million dollars, bringing 6,350 international visitors who spent an average of 372 dollars each per day with a stay of around 6 nights.

If you compare these figures with the previous year, you can see a growth of 3

million dollars. The amount of visitors also increased with 1,000 visitors while the average cost per person grew with 22 dollars and the average amount of nights stayed grew with 0.3.

Based on a survey done in 2019, it was calculated that 78.8% of the international

visitors came with the purpose of attending the festival. 87.5% of the tickets for the festival were bought in the North American market and 77.5% of the visitors stayed in a hotel and had strong indications that they are and will be loyal to the destination and festival.

A.T.A hopes that the festival can grow again and reach the levels it was on in 2019, seeing how the cooperation is growing fast and taking place in Aruba.

Local tickets will be on sale starting this weekend with the special price of 70 dollars per night at various locations in Aruba. □

Honoring of loyal visitors at Divi Village

EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emerald Ambassador".

The honorees are: Randy and Judy Zamarron from Michigan, USA, who have been honored as Goodwill Ambassadors at their

home away from home. The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between the 10-20-35 consecutive years each title carries.

The couple loves coming to the island for its warm weather, beautiful beaches and friendly people.

Heyliger together with the representatives of Divi Village presented the certificates to the honorees and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □



The Central Bureau of Statistics presents the most important findings for the Consumer Price Index for the month of February 2022

The CPI for February 2022 is 100.44, an increase of 0.4% compared to the index of January 2022 (100.07) and accumulating a decrease of 0.2% up to and including February of this year.

The percentage change of the CPI over the last twelve (12) months (February 2021 to February 2022) is 3.5, an increase of 5.4 percentage points (ppts) compared to the percentage change for the same period of last year (-1.9%). The period average percentage change of the CPI for the period February 2021 - February 2022 is 1.7%, an increase of 3.9 ppts compared to the period average percentage change over the period February 2020 - February 2021 (-2.2%).

During this month, eight (8) of the twelve (12) sectors registered increases in prices. The increases that had the greatest influence on the CPI were registered for the "Transport" (2.1%) and "Recreation and culture" (1.9%) sectors, which contributed with an effect of 0.28 and 0.19 ppts, respectively. The increases in the remaining sectors had an effect of 0.21 ppts on the CPI of February 2022. Aforementioned increases were partially offset mainly by a decrease in the index for the "Housing" (-0.7%) sector, causing an effect of -0.19 ppts. The decreases in the remaining sectors had an effect of -0.12 ppts on the CPI of February 2022.

The increase in the "Transport" sector was mainly due to an increase in the category "Operation of personal transport equipment" (4.9%), which contributed to an effect of 0.40 ppts. The increase in the "Recreation and culture" sector was mainly due to an increase in the category "Holidays" (6.3%), which contributed to an effect of 0.17 ppts.

The decrease in the "Housing" sector was mainly due to a decrease in the

Table 1 Overview percentage change of the CPI

	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22
Index	97.00	97.59	97.57	97.39	98.09	98.53	98.84	99.24	99.31	99.90	100.60	100.07	100.44
Monthly	0.1	0.6	0.0	-0.2	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.7	-0.5	0.4
Year-to-date	-0.1	0.5	0.5	0.3	1.1	1.5	1.8	2.2	2.3	2.9	3.6	-0.5	-0.2
End of period	-1.9	-1.1	-0.4	-0.2	1.0	1.8	1.4	2.2	2.4	3.1	3.6	3.3	3.5
Period average	-2.2	-2.3	-2.3	-2.2	-1.8	-1.4	-1.1	-0.7	-0.3	0.2	0.7	1.2	1.7
Goods	0.4	1.2	1.2	-0.4	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.9	-0.7	0.7	1.4	-0.6	0.1
Services	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.2	-0.2	1.1	0.5	-0.2	-0.5	0.7
CPIC	-0.9	-1.2	-1.4	-1.7	-1.6	-1.4	-1.3	-1.2	-0.9	-0.7	-0.3	0.1	0.5
Energy	-7.9	-7.5	-6.1	-4.1	-2.4	-0.9	0.6	2.0	3.4	5.1	6.7	7.5	8.2
Food	-2.0	-2.3	-2.6	-2.6	-2.5	-2.3	-2.1	-1.7	-1.4	-0.9	-0.3	0.4	1.2
1 adult	2,258	2,258	2,262	2,263	2,271	2,293	2,294	2,304	2,311	2,331	2,337	2,343	2,348
2 adults + 2 children	4,742	4,741	4,750	4,752	4,770	4,815	4,817	4,839	4,854	4,896	4,907	4,920	4,931

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

category "Maintenance and repair of the dwelling" (-4.2%), which contributed to an effect of -0.23 ppts.

Consumption basket

The consumption basket of the CPI consists of 408 goods and services. Compared to January 2022, 46.6% of these products had an increase in price, causing an effect of 1.47 ppts, while 36.3% showed a decrease, contributing to an effect of -1.10 ppts and the remaining 17.2% had no change in price. The prices of goods increased by 0.1% and caused an influence of 0.06 ppts. The prices of services showed an increase of 0.7% and had an influence of 0.31 ppts on the CPI of February 2022.

Core inflation

The CPIC (core inflation) - CPI excluding the effect of energy and food - was 0.5% in February 2022. The energy index - which con-

sists of the products: electricity, water, gasoline and diesel - was 8.2%. The food index showed an increase of 1.2%.

Subsistence level

The subsistence level for a household consisting of two (2) adults and two (2) children (aged 0-14 years) in February 2022 is Afl. 4,931, an increase of Afl. 189 compared to February 2021 (Afl. 4,742). The subsistence level for a single adult household is Afl. 2,348, an increase of Afl. 90 compared to February 2021 (Afl. 2,258).

Change in prices of crude oil, utilities, gasoline and diesel in February 2022

The prices of utilities (electricity and water), gasoline and diesel are for the greater part determined by international crude oil prices. In February 2022 the average price per barrel of crude oil (US\$ 91.32) had an increase of US\$ 8.26 (9.9%) compared to January 2022

(US\$ 83.06). The prices of electricity and water did not change compared to January 2022. Subsequently, the average electricity price per household remained at Afl. 240.09, while the average price of water per household remained at Afl. 137.05.

In February 2022 the price of gasoline registered an increase of Afl. 15.10 cents (6.5%) and had an effect of 0.31 ppts on the CPI. The price of diesel registered an increase of Afl. 19.10 cents (9.8%) and had an effect of 0.03 ppts on the CPI of February 2022. In February 2022, utilities, gasoline and diesel as a group showed an increase in price of 2.1% compared to January 2022, and had an influence of 0.34 ppts on the CPI, while the remaining 404 goods and services, as a group, show an increase of 0.03% and had an effect of 0.03 ppts on the CPI.

Change in prices of Food & catering services in February 2022

The "Food & catering services" index showed an increase of 0.8% in February 2022, after an increase of 0.8% in January 2022. The index for "Food at home" showed an increase of 1.1% in February, as ten (10) of the eleven (11) "Food at home" indices increased in February 2022.

The "Fruit" index registered the largest increase (2.8%) in February 2022. Furthermore, other significant increases were posted in the indices for "Non-alcoholic beverages" (1.7%), "Sugar, jam, honey and other confectionery" (1.3%), "Milk, cheese and eggs" (1.3%), "Food products n.e.c." (1.1%), "Meat" (1.0%) and "Vegetables" (1.0%). The "Potatoes and other tubers" (-3.8%) index registered the only decrease in February 2022. Over the last twelve (12) months, the "Food & catering services" has increased by 5.7%. The "Food at home" index showed an increase of 6.1%, where all of the "Food at home" indices increased over the last year. The "Oils and fats" index increased by 19.5%, the largest increase among the "Food at home" food groups.

Furthermore, other significant increases were posted in the indices for "Fruit" (12.2%), "Meat" (8.5%) and "Potatoes and other tubers" (5.6%). The index for "Food away from home" increased by 0.2% in February 2022 and has increased by 4.8% over the last twelve (12) months.

In February 2022, "Food at home" and "Food away from home" as a group showed an increase in price of 0.8% compared to January 2022, and had an influence of 0.13 ppts on the CPI, while the remaining goods and services, as a group, experienced an increase in price of 0.3%, causing an effect of 0.24 ppts on the CPI. □

Table 2 Percentage change by sector

Sector	Weight coefficient	Effect Jan - Feb	Percentage changes			
			Monthly Jan - Feb	Year-to-date Dec - Feb	End of period Feb 21 - Feb 22	Period average Feb 21 - Feb 22
CPI	10,000.0	0.37	0.4	-0.2	3.5	1.7
01. Food and non-alcoholic beverages	1,087.7	0.12	1.1	1.4	6.1	1.2
02. Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	78.2	0.00	0.3	1.4	3.3	0.6
03. Clothing and footwear	276.8	-0.10	-3.5	-0.2	7.2	-4.3
04. Housing	2,522.2	-0.19	-0.7	-0.1	0.5	0.8
05. Household operation	929.2	0.04	0.4	-4.6	3.8	0.7
06. Health	223.1	-0.02	-1.0	-0.4	-1.9	-3.1
07. Transport	1,257.4	0.28	2.1	2.3	12.1	12.5
08. Communications	849.6	0.02	0.2	-0.1	-0.7	-0.3
09. Recreation and culture	1,013.3	0.19	1.9	-2.9	2.8	-0.9
10. Education	98.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	4.6	2.7
11. Restaurants and hotels	442.0	0.01	0.2	2.2	5.1	1.0
12. Miscellaneous goods and services	1,222.6	0.03	0.2	0.4	2.0	0.4

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

Table 3 Categories with the greatest positive effect on the CPI of February 2022

Category	Monthly change	Effect
Operation of personal transport equipment	4.9	0.40
Holidays	6.3	0.17
Telephone and telefax equipment	32.1	0.11
Food	1.0	0.10

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

Table 4 Categories with the greatest negative effect on the CPI of February 2022

Category	Monthly change	Effect
Maintenance and repair of the dwelling	-4.2	-0.23
Purchase of vehicles	-3.2	-0.15
Clothing	-4.6	-0.10
Telephone and telefax services	-1.1	-0.09

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Aruba

New vehicles must average 40 mpg by 2026, up from 28 mpg

By TOM KRISHER

DETROIT (AP) — New vehicles sold in the U.S. will have to average at least 40 miles per gallon of gasoline in 2026, up from about 28 mpg, under new federal rules unveiled Friday that undo a rollback of standards enacted under President Donald Trump.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said its new fuel economy requirements are the strongest to date and the maximum the industry can achieve over the time period. They will reduce gasoline consumption by more than 220 billion gallons over the life of vehicles, compared with the Trump standards.

They're expected to decrease carbon dioxide emissions but not as much as some environmentalists want and raise new vehicle prices in an industry already pressed by inflation and supply chain issues.

For the current model year, standards enacted under Trump require the fleet of new vehicles to get just under 28 miles per gallon in real-world driving. The new requirements increase gas mileage by 8% per year for model years 2024 and 2025 and 10% in the 2026 model year.



This Dec. 12, 2018, file photo shows traffic on the Hollywood Freeway in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, whose department includes NHTSA, said the rules also will help strengthen national security by making the country less dependent on foreign oil and less vulnerable to volatile gasoline prices. Gasoline nationwide has spiked to an average of more than \$4.22 per gallon, with much of the increase coming since Russia, a major oil producer, invaded Ukraine in late February. It cost \$2.88 per gallon just a year ago, according to AAA.

Gas prices also have helped to fuel inflation to

a 40-year high, eating up household budgets and hitting President Joe Biden's approval ratings.

"Transportation is the second-largest cost for American families, only behind housing," Buttigieg said. The new standards, he said, will help keep the U.S. more secure and preserve "the freedom of our country to chart its future without being subject to other countries and to the decisions that are being made in the boardrooms of energy companies."

But auto dealers say more stringent requirements drive up prices and push

people out of an already expensive new-car market. NHTSA projects that the new rules will raise the price of a new vehicle in the 2029 model year by \$1,087.

Trump's administration rolled back fuel economy standards, allowing them to rise 1.5% per year, which environmental groups said was inadequate to limit planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change. The standards had been rising about 5% per year previously.

But the new standards won't immediately match those adopted through

2025 under President Barack Obama. NHTSA officials said they will equal the Obama standards by 2025 and slightly exceed them for the 2026 model year.

The Obama-era standards automatically adjusted for changes in the type of vehicles people are buying. When they were enacted in 2012, 51% of new vehicle sales were cars and 49% SUVs and trucks. Last year, 77% of new vehicle sales were SUVs and trucks, which generally are less efficient than cars.

Some environmental groups said the new requirements from NHTSA under Biden don't go far enough to fight global warming. Others supported the new standards as a big step toward reducing emissions, with the American Lung Association calling for even stronger standards to drive a transition to all new vehicles having zero-emissions by 2035.

"Climate change has gotten much worse, but these rules only require automakers to reduce gas-guzzling slightly more than they agreed to cut nine years ago," said Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Transport Center at the Center for Biological Diversity. □

GameStop is surging again on first stock split in 15 years

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Shares of GameStop surged Friday after the video game retailer announced that it would attempt its first stock split in 15 years.

The Grapevine, Texas, company said in a regulatory filing late Thursday that it wants to increase its share count to 1 billion, from 300 million, so it can implement a stock split in the form of a dividend. It plans to seek shareholder approval at its upcoming annual meeting. A stock split would change the price-per-stock, but not the overall value of those holdings. The maneuver can push up a company's

stock price at least temporarily, and it did so Friday. Shares of GameStop jumped 8% at the opening bell.

JPMorgan Friday that while stock splits may not be the new buyback, they are "an additional tool to push stock prices higher despite financial theory saying otherwise."

GameStop's announcement comes just days after electric vehicle maker Tesla announced its second stock split in less than two years. In addition, Alphabet, Google's parent company, announced a 20-for-1 split in February. Amazon said this month that it would do a split of the same ratio.

Big tech companies have pursued stock splits after major run-ups in the price of their shares, which can open the door to retail investors that do not have the financial heft to buy shares that head into quadruple digits.

However, a single share of Google, Tesla, or Alphabet cost between \$1,000 and \$3,300. And shares of Tesla, Alphabet and Apple are up between 30% and 60% over the past 12 months. Shares of GameStop are down 13% over that same stretch and can be had for less than \$200 each.

Yet GameStop Corp. became a meme darling early last year when hundreds



This Jan. 28, 2021, file photo, shows a GameStop store in New York.

Associated Press

of thousands of smaller investors suddenly started buying its shares, driving its price to heights that shocked Wall Street. The shares rocketed from \$39 to \$347 in just a week during its run-up.

Any maneuvers from the company garner intense

interest from retail investors, particularly after Chewy co-founder Ryan Cohen took a huge stake in the company and now sits on its board. Investors have pinned their hopes on Cohen to push the traditional retailer in a more online direction. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 39 Enjoyed avidly
 - 1 Stock mark
 - 6 Tickle
 - 11 Lover of drama
 - 12 Insipid
 - 13 Figure of speech
 - 14 Walk with pride
 - 15 Haysbert of "Lucifer"
 - 17 Groom's answer
 - 18 Singer Reed
 - 19 Kind of bowling
 - 22 Scroll-work shape
 - 23 Makes amends
 - 24 Articles
 - 25 Money, in slang
 - 27 Method
 - 30 Month of fasting
 - 31 Mine matter
 - 32 Mamie's husband
 - 33 Eastern temple
 - 35 Italian physicist
 - 38 Ocean's motions

A	L	P	H	A		B	E	A	C	H
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Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
- 1 Stable sight
 - 2 Western contests
 - 3 Pretty good grade
 - 4 Very bright
 - 5 Controlled
 - 6 Crunch targets
 - 7 Yoga need
 - 8 Green, perhaps
 - 9 Mideast natives
 - 10 Rocker John
 - 16 Web directory
 - 20 Picked by the party
 - 21 Print units
 - 24 Writer Levin
 - 25 Sioux people
 - 26 Diner dish
 - 27 Stiff
 - 28 Fiery
 - 29 Baker's supplies
 - 30 Competitor
 - 34 Hand over
 - 36 Boy king of Egypt
 - 37 Mimic

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35			36	37		38				
39						40				
41						42				

4-2

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-2 CRYPTOQUOTE

Q T W M D G M J ' E F E Q V R E M
W M D I U Z X D N F A B N J E B N W ' I N
L N Q J P E N F E N G , E B N W ' I N J M E
U Z X D N F ; E B N W ' I N B M L L Q N F .

— CMJ FENAZIE

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MANY OF THE TRUTHS WE CLING TO DEPEND GREATLY UPON OUR OWN POINT OF VIEW. — GEORGE LUCAS

Into the wild: Animals the latest frontier in COVID fight



A wildlife team covers a young buck's head with a cloth to help calm it before testing the deer for the coronavirus and taking other biological samples in Grand Portage, Minn. on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.

Associated Press

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

GRAND PORTAGE, Minn. (AP) —

To administer this COVID test, Todd Kautz had to lie on his belly in the snow and worm his upper body into the narrow den of a hibernating black bear. Training a light on its snout, Kautz carefully slipped a long cotton swab into the bear's nostrils five times.

For postdoctoral researcher Kautz and a team of other wildlife experts, tracking the coronavirus means freezing temperatures, icy roads, trudging through deep snow and getting uncomfortably close to potentially dangerous wildlife. They're testing bears, moose, deer and wolves on a Native American reservation in the remote north woods about 5 miles from Canada. Like researchers around the world, they are trying to figure out how, how much and where wildlife is spreading the virus.

Scientists are concerned that the virus could evolve within animal populations potentially spawning dangerous viral mutants

that could jump back to people, spread among us and reignite what for now seems to some people like a waning crisis.

The coronavirus pandemic has served as a stark and tragic example of how closely animal health and human health are linked. While the origins of the virus have not been proven, many scientists say it likely jumped from bats to humans, either directly or through another species that was being sold live in Wuhan, China.

And now the virus has been confirmed in wildlife in at least 24 U.S. states, including Minnesota. Recently, an early Canadian study showed someone in nearby Ontario likely contracted a highly mutated strain from a deer.

"If the virus can establish itself in a wild animal reservoir, it will always be out there with the threat to spill back into the human population," said University of Minnesota researcher Matthew Aliota, who is working with the Grand Portage Reservation team.

E.J. Isaac, a fish and wildlife

biologist for the reservation that's home to the Grand Portage Ojibwe, said he expects the stakes to get even higher with the start of spring, as bears wake from hibernation and deer and wolves roam to different regions.

"If we consider that there are many species and they're all intermingling to some extent, their patterns and their movements can exponentially increase the amount of transmission that could occur," he said.

INTO THE WILD

Their research is meant to ward off such unwelcome surprises. But it carries its own set of risks.

Seth Moore, who directs the reservation biology and environment department, recently almost got bitten by a wolf.

And they sometimes team with a crew from the Texas-based company Heliwild to capture animals from the air. One chilly late-winter afternoon, the men climbed into a small helicopter with no side doors that lifted above the treetops. Flying low, they quickly spotted a deer in a forest clearing. They targeted the animal from the air with a net gun and dropped Moore off.

Wind whipped at his face as he worked in deep snow to quickly swab the deer's nose for COVID, put on a tracking collar and collect blood and other biological samples for different research.

The men capture moose in much the same way, using tranquilizer darts instead of nets. They trap wolves and deer either from the air or on the ground, and trap bears on the ground.

They knew of the young male bear they recently tested because they had already been tracking it. To get to the den, they had to take snowmobiles to the bottom of a hill then hike a narrow, winding path in snow shoes.

When Kautz crawled partway into the den, a colleague held his feet to pull him out quickly if necessary. □

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Census records from 1950 could solve some family mysteries

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

Elaine Powell set her alarm and jumped on her computer just after midnight so she could find the first time she appeared in the U.S. population count — information she had to wait more than seven decades to see.

Powell, who was born in 1946, found her name recorded at a St. Louis address early Friday, shortly after the federal archives released digitized individual records of 151 million people from the 1950 census. But that was just the beginning. She's now hoping the records will help her track down information about a great-grandmother she never knew.

"When you're a family historian or genealogist, it's all about the census," said Powell, president of the Central Florida Genealogical Society.

For privacy reasons, records identifying people by name can't be made public until 72 years after they are gathered during the once-a-decade U.S. head count. The 72-year rule was part of a 1952 agreement between the archivist of the U.S. at the time and the Census Bureau director at the time, but no one seems to know how they settled on that number.

The digitized records have information about household members' names, race, sex, age, address, occupations, hours worked in the previous week, salaries, education levels, marital status, where they were born, as well as where their parents were born. With the help of artificial intelligence technology that scanned and deciphered the hand-



Elaine Powell, president of the Central Florida Genealogical Society poses with photos of her family tree on a wall at her home in Orlando, Fla., Wednesday, March 30, 2022.

Associated Press

written records, the National Archives has indexed them into a searchable database.

Officials acknowledge that what is on the website starting Friday is "a first draft," in which specific people are most likely to be found initially only by searching for whoever was listed as the head of their household. For instance, if former President George W. Bush wanted to find information about his West Texas home in 1950, he would have to start by searching under the name of his father, former President George Herbert Walker Bush.

The website will include a tool allowing users to fix any incorrect names or add missing names.

"This is an opportunity for

you to refine and enhance ... names and make the population schedules more accessible for everyone," said U.S. Archivist David Ferriero. Two outside genealogical groups, Ancestry and FamilySearch, a division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are teaming up to serve as a quality check on the records by creating their own index separate from the National Archives.

Anywhere from 400,000 to 800,000 volunteers across the U.S., under the coordination of FamilySearch, will double-check the entries that have been scanned and indexed with the actual digital images.

Now that the records have been made public, Powell said she hopes to learn

about a great-grandmother about whom she only recently was told had been alive up until Powell was around age 10. They never met because the great-grandmother, who had dementia, was kept hidden at home from other relatives. "I'm most anxious to find out about my great-grandmother," Powell said.

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David Hyde Pierce shines behind the chef star in 'Julia'

By MARK KENNEDY

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — David Hyde Pierce returns to TV this spring playing a familiar part — an erudite man who adores fine food, wine and art. But this has nothing to do with "Frasier."

Pierce is playing Paul Child, husband and chief cheerleader of Julia Child, whose warbling, encouraging voice and able hands brought the intricacies of French cuisine to American home cooks through her TV series and books.

"These are two people of great depth, of great complexity of character, who found each other, and I think we all are luckier for it," said Pierce. "I really loved Paul, having come to study him."

HBO Max's eight-part "Julia" traces its culinary heroine's unlikely arc from home kitchen cook to national icon, all the while supported by her husband, a diplomat-turned-artist. "You're teaching Americans how to taste life, and they're listening; that's (expletive) huge," he tells her.

Viewers will see Paul Child evolve from a snob who refuses to allow a television set in their home to a man eager to hold cue cards for his wife on the kitchen set of "The French Chef."

"I think about him in comparison to the character of Niles on 'Frasier' because they're two characters who obviously both love food and wine and stuff like that," said Pierce. "But



This image released by HBO Max shows David Hyde Pierce in a scene from the series "Julia." Pierce portrays Peter Child, husband and chief cheerleader of cooking legend Julia Child.

Associated Press

I think of Niles as a person who lived in spite of his body. And Paul is a man who lives completely in his body."

Opposite him is Sarah Lancashire as the title character, nailing Julia's vocal and physical tics, the clucking and cooing, lurching movements and sudden gales of laughter. They make a fascinating couple — she impulsive and charmingly awkward and he more introspective and careful. Viewers will instantly recognize Julia, but may know nothing of her husband, who didn't make appearances on her show and whose influence is more subtle. Take her kitchen: Paul was the one who drew

outlines of every single pot and pan on a pegboard so that they would always go back to the right place.

"That combination of Julia's spontaneity and his meticulousness really was part of what made them such a great pair," said Pierce.

The cast also includes Isabella Rossellini, Fran Kranz, Brittany Bradford, James Cromwell, Jefferson Mays, Judith Light and "Cheers" alumna Bebe Neuwirth.

Created by Daniel Goldfarb, the series examines workplace politics, feminism and the downside of celebrity. The role of Paul is also an interesting model of what it means to be an ally. "It can't be easy having a woman steal your shine,"

he is told.

"It was just as Julia's star is ascending when his was starting to dim," said Pierce.

"It is a credit to him and a really important part of the relationship to examine that, especially at that time given men's roles and women's roles."

Goldfarb, a co-producer of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," said the marriage was unusual in that it evolved, starting in the old-fashioned 1950s and growing into a modern partnership that was playful and lusty.

"It's one of the great love stories of all time," he said. "It sort of grew and changed, and they play different roles and different times of their life."

Chris Keyser, the showrunner and executive producer, credits Paul Child with bravery for being able to see that the world was changing and going along with it.

"This is something I think very moving about figures of history who bridge two different periods and are able to do that," he said. "We find him really moving and remarkable."

The project was filmed during the pandemic, making research challenging. Paul Child died in 1994 and Pierce was unable to access the couples' cache of letters and writings at Harvard University because of the shutdown. But librarians read excerpts to him over the phone, and Pierce consulted Paul's twin brother's memoir.

Pierce found in Paul Child a complex man, a one-time merchant marine, who had a black belt in judo, played the violin and had a fear of heights. He had once gotten a job in Paris repairing stained glass in cathedrals. He recognized talent and cheered it — especially when it came from his wife. "He realizes suddenly that she's a star. The things that he sees in her — the thing that makes her just glow in his eyes — is something that is bigger than both of them," said Pierce.

Later episodes deal with the costs of that pivot, the toll it takes when someone willingly steps behind their partner and lets their own dreams slip aside. □



Tom Hanks arrives at the premiere of "Finch" on Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2021, at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, Calif.

Associated Press

A name of their own: Hanks to toss 1st pitch for Guardians

CLEVELAND (AP) — Tom Hanks will help launch a new era of Cleveland baseball.

The Oscar-winning actor will throw out the ceremonial first pitch before the Guardians' home opener against the San Francisco Giants on April 15. It will be Cleveland's first home game since dropping Indians, the team's name since 1915.

Hanks, who famously said

"There is no crying in baseball" while portraying the manager of an all-female team in "A League of Their Own," has backed Cleveland's major league team since the late 1970s, when he was an intern in the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival before going to Hollywood.

"I've had Guardians fever since 1977 when I caught my first game in Section 19 of Cleveland's Lakefront

Municipal Stadium," Hanks said. "I'm honored to return to Cleveland and Progressive Field for the first home game of the Cleveland Guardians era."

When the team made its name change in July, Hanks was the narrator for a video to announce the switch to Guardians.

Hanks won consecutive Academy Awards for best actor for roles in "Philadelphia" and "Forrest Gump." □

Parker hopes Title IX documentary serves as inspiration

By JOE REEDY

Title IX has been a passionate subject for Candace Parker ever since she learned of its impact while doing a paper on it in the eighth grade.

So, it is no surprise her first documentary as an executive producer is about the landmark legislation. On Saturday, "Title IX: 37 Words That Changed America," will open coverage of the men's Final Four on TBS at 1 p.m. EDT.

"I sit here because of Title IX. Although we have so many wins, we have so much further to go. That's why we went with having the Title IX story told through my eyes so that you can see if Title IX didn't exist, I wouldn't exist," Parker said.

Parker considers herself a first-generation benefactor of Title IX, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Parker's mother, Sara, attended Iowa before Title IX became law. Candace's 12-year old daughter, Lai-



Chicago Sky forward Candace Parker controls the ball during a WNBA basketball game against the Washington Mystics, May 15, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

laa Nicole Williams, will have more opportunities. "It means a lot to be able to have my mom and my daughter be a part of this," Parker said. "I have inspiration from my mom and her story. And then as well for my daughter, I want to continue to open up doors, and I don't want her to see limitations."

The documentary also comes as inequities between the NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments are coming under intense scrutiny.

"Something as simple as March Madness, right?

Like, now women can use that. That's unbelievable. It's 2022," Parker said. "But things are changing. But it still doesn't take away that we still have so much farther to go. I think that's the whole point of doing this documentary is if you invest, it's not a charity, it's an investment. And it's an honest investment of trying to make it work. And I think for so long, we just existed; women's sports existed as something that had to be there. And now we look at it as an investment, and then I think we can start moving things forward."

Parker won a pair of NCAA championships at Tennessee while being coached by one of the pioneers of Title IX, the late Pat Summitt. Parker has parlayed that experience into a successful career as a two-time WNBA champion and MVP and two gold medals in the Olympics.

Parker is also an accomplished analyst for Turner Sports on its NBA and NCAA Tournament coverage since 2018. During discussions about a contract extension at Turner, Parker and her representatives first pitched the idea of a doc-

umentary. It got the green light for production last November.

The documentary includes interviews with Billie Jean King, Peyton Manning, Lisa Leslie, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"There's a number of influential voices that I think I have to pinch myself to realize that they're a part of it," Parker said. "To have Billie Jean King, like the 10-year-old girl that did a biography project on her, I just think it's just so special."

"Title IX doesn't just impact women. To watch Peyton Manning talk about how Pat really influenced his life, as a competitor and just as an individual. To see somebody that is an icon to say that I think speaks to how valuable women in leadership positions are."

Having the documentary tip-off Turner's Final Four coverage on Saturday should give it a broader audience. "The Arena" will air following the documentary and focus on the impact of Title IX on sports and society. This is also the first project for Parker's production company — Baby Hair Productions — and was also produced with Scout Productions. □

Osaka-Swiatek in Miami women's final; Ruud advances

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)

— Naomi Osaka is playing her first final in more than a year on Saturday, which certainly sounds like a comeback story.

She doesn't see it that way. The unseeded Osaka will meet second-seeded Iga Swiatek in the Miami Open women's final. It's a match-up pitting the world's former No. 1-ranked player against the woman who will replace the now-retired Ash Barty atop the women's rankings on Monday.

"A lot of people have been telling me, 'You're back' and stuff like that," Osaka told reporters after qualifying for the final. "But to be honest, I don't feel like I left, if that makes sense. I have always been this player. I

just didn't play the matches."

Osaka was No. 1 in the world before Barty took over in 2019; Osaka started this tournament ranked No. 77 in the world in large part because she simply hasn't played as much while working on her mental health.

Barty held that No. 1 spot since, then decided to retire last week and asked to be removed from the rankings in a move that opened the door for Swiatek to ascend to the top spot.

The last time Swiatek lost a match was in February, when she was ranked No. 9 in the world. She is 16-0 since and on the brink of completing the Sunshine Double — championships at both Indian Wells and

Miami.

"I am excited for sure," Swiatek said. "But on the other hand, for me, the most important job is this is a match like any other. I don't want to change my routines, I don't want to change my attitude, because it's been working out pretty well. I'm going to treat it like any other match."

The men's final is Sunday. No. 6 seed Casper Ruud earned the first spot in the title match by defeating Francisco Cerundolo 6-4, 6-1 in Friday's semifinals.

"It was a tough match, even though the scoreline said two straight sets," said Ruud, who will be playing in a Masters 1000-level final for the first time. "It was tough."



Naomi Osaka of Japan poses for selfies with fans after winning her women's semifinal match against Belinda Bencic of Switzerland, at the Miami Open tennis tournament, Thursday, March 31, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

Ruud will face either No. 8 seed Hubert Hurkacz — the defending Miami champion — or rising star and

No. 14 seed Carlos Alcaraz in the title match. Hurkacz and Alcaraz play their semifinal on Friday night. □

NIT joins other sports tradition in fading away

By PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Columnist

With all eyes focused on the Final Four, it's doubtful that many noticed the passing of a storied tradition in college hoops.

The National Invitation Tournament ended a run of more than eight decades at New York City's Madison Square Garden — actually, two different versions of the Garden, if you wanna get picky — with Xavier's 73-72 victory over Texas A&M.

"Madison Square Garden is a special court," Xavier's Jack Nunge said. "Everybody knows the feel when you're playing out there and you just want to give it your all — all the history that's there."

But all that history wasn't enough to keep the NIT at MSG.

The semifinals and championship game will move to another, still-to-be-determined city for at least the next two years, and there's no word on whether the final rounds of the consolation tournament will ever return to the Big Apple.

While the NIT has largely faded from relevance in recent decades — attendance for Thursday night's game was a paltry 3,551 — there was actually a time when it was a bigger deal than the NCAA Tournament.

Marquette coach Al McGuire turned down the NAAs in 1970 because he was unhappy with where his team was assigned to play. He accepted an NIT bid instead — and his team captured the title.

Now, as the largely irrelevant NIT prepares to leave NYC, we're reminded once again that sports — like life itself — never stays the same.

Just look at these other traditions that went by the wayside, with nary an April Fools' Day joke in the bunch:

HERE COMES THE SUN

Until Game 4 at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium in 1971, all World Series contests were played during the day, leaving plenty of time to get to dinner for the early bird special. While



In this Oct. 24, 2013, file photo, members of the media stand on the basketball court during a tour of the newly-renovated Madison Square Garden in New York.

Associated Press

most everyone bemoans the late hours that plague today's Fall Classic, especially those who live on the East Coast, there's no chance of the networks giving up their prime-time slots.

DRIVERS, START YOUR LEGS

The 24 Hours of Le Mans once featured a chaotic start like no other in auto racing. The drivers would line up on the opposite side of the track and sprint across the tarmac to hop into their cars. Obviously, this wasn't the safest way to begin an endurance race, especially when some drivers didn't take the time to buckle up or close their doors properly. It was dropped after the 1969 race.

CAN YOU SAY ABA?

Before the major U.S. sports leagues expanded to basically every city with more than three Starbucks, rival leagues popped up every

few years to take on the big boys. Three different American Football Leagues challenged the NFL before the fourth incarnation forced a merger, giving us the spectacle known as the Super Bowl. The NBA and NHL both endured costly fights with upstart organizations before finally taking in some of their teams to shut down the competition.

COLLEGE KIDS VS. THE PROS

A longtime tradition that's downright impossible to fathom in today's times was the Chicago Charities College All-Star Game, which ran from 1934-76 and pitted top college stars against NFL champions. Attention waned as the pros won the final 12 meetings, the last of which was called off late in the third quarter because of a torrential downpour and fans storming the field with the Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers leading 24-0.

WHILE WE'RE ON MEANINGLESS GAMES ...

The men's NCAA Tournament, for no good reason, once featured third-place games at both the regional finals and the Final Four. The last of these was played in 1981, with Ralph Sampson's Virginia Cavaliers defeating LSU 78-74 at Philadelphia's Spectrum before Indiana's victory over North Carolina in the game that actually mattered for the national championship. In this same vein, the NFL held a third-place game (known as the Playoff Bowl) throughout the 1960s to benefit the players' pension fund. Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi derisively called it "a losers' bowl for losers."

AT THE MOVIES

Before pay-per-view and streaming services, boxing's biggest fights were available only via closed circuit at movie theaters and oth-

er large venues. More than 50 million worldwide reportedly watched Muhammad Ali upset George Foreman in 1974's "Rumble in the Jungle." Now, no one has to leave their recliner.

LIGHT THE TORCH — TWICE

The Winter Olympics used to be held in the same year as the Summer Games, but that format ended after Albertville, France, and Barcelona, Spain, hosted in 1992. The 1994 Lillehammer Games were the first to held in a different year than the summer spectacle, so now we have an Olympics to watch every two years instead of four.

NEW YEAR'S DAY SPECTACULAR

While no one misses the days when the national champion was determined by a vote of journalists and coaches, we're still a bit nostalgic for New Year's Day being the pinnacle of the college football season. In 1978, all four major bowls were held hours apart (actually on Jan. 2, to avoid a conflict with NFL playoff games). Here's what happened: No. 5 Notre Dame shocked top-ranked Texas at the Cotton Bowl; No. 3 Alabama won the Sugar Bowl; No. 4 Michigan was upset in the Rose Bowl and No. 2 Oklahoma was routed in the Orange Bowl. When the dust settled, the Fighting Irish were voted national champs.

STYMIED ON THE GREEN

Here's one we'd really like to bring back: the stymie. Before rule changes in 1938 (and a full overhaul in 1952), golfers were prevented from marking their ball on the green. In other words, a player's putt might be blocked — or stymied, get it? — by an opponent's ball, which led to some very creative uses of the short stick. We'd love to see Rory McIlroy have to chip a putt to reach the cup.

FADING INTO OBSCURITY

Finally, is the Davis Cup still being played in tennis? How about the America's Cup in sailing? Apparently so, but neither carries nearly the weight it once did in the sporting world. Nothing stays the same. □